

# Advanced Machinery A cut above



Modern technology has resulted in production techniques being simplified and areas of production overlapping. An example of this is printing onto material. There is the traditional method of silkscreen printing for T-shirts and other garments, but in recent years other techniques have been developed which allow for shorter runs or increased productivity to be handled. Signage has also seen different production techniques.

This has resulted in more players and different technologies becoming active in sectors which were the exclusive domain of silkscreen printers. High-speed cutters and self-adhesive vinyl and heat-sealed flocking mean that there are new and alternate methods to the production of signage, decals, displays and clothing designs.

One company which has been formed as a small start-up is Lanford Agencies. While it is part of a larger group comprising 13 companies active in a number of different industries, Lanford Agencies is starting to make a name for itself in the production of promotional items, signage and corporate clothing. While this may previously have been considered a printing process, modern printing and cutting

systems have resulted in the democratisation of this activity.

Company owner Lee Ashford originally installed a small-format cutter, a Silhouette CAMEO with the aim of producing short-run promotional items and prints for T-Shirts. While the cutter was capable of doing the work, the rapid response from customers meant that its size and relatively low speed were simply not capable of keeping up with demand. Lee commented, 'Our first cutter was fine in the beginning but as volumes increased I soon realised that it was not going to be able to handle the quantity required. Not only that, but it was limited to handling A4 size sheets of vinyl or flocking and this meant that there was a lot of waste when cutting down from rolls.'